

THE DELIUS SOCIETY JOURNAL

F. Delius
Dawn Redwood
After Kapp

THE DELIUS SOCIETY JOURNAL

NUMBER 44

EDITOR : CHRISTOPHER W REDWOOD

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The Delius Society Journal is published in January, April, July and October.
Material should reach the Editor as early as possible, the closing date for
the October issue being August 31st, 1974.

EDITORIAL

May 18th saw the Annual General Meeting and Dinner of the Delius Society. Owing to the NALGO work-to-rule some difficulty had been experienced in finding a suitable venue for the AGM and eventually a room was booked at the Royal Festival Hall. What was provided consisted of a space surrounded by sliding partitions, just below the main bar, and separated from the foyer above by only a horizontal Venetian blind. I must confess that I squirmed in my seat with embarrassment as our President spoke about his American trip against the rattle of glasses and the clink of money in the tills of the bar above; but when it came to playing a tape-recording of a Delius Violin Sonata against fortissimo pop music from the kitchen, well - the less said about it the better. (I'm sure that Delius would have had a few well chosen words to say about English organisation!) Frankly, if this is the best that the country's premier concert-hall can do for a private booking, I for one feel that it is a pretty poor show.

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Fortunately, the dinner in the evening, held at Kettner's, was a much happier affair. Besides our President, Mr Eric Fenby, and Vice-Presidents Dr Philip Emanuel and Mr Stanford Robinson, all accompanied by their wives, and Dr Roland Gibson, we were delighted to see Lord and Lady Boothby. I believe that it was only the second time that they had been able to attend an Annual Dinner of the Delius Society. Other guests of honour were Mr and Mrs Anthony Askew. Mr Askew was the producer of the highly successful Delius Birthday Concert on BBC Radio 3 this year. We were also delighted to welcome two of our American members, Mr R F Ivons and Mr W Perrott. Amongst other members who are not able to attend Society functions regularly, we were pleased to see Mr Jones of Birmingham with his wife and daughter, and Mr and Mrs Dodd who have recently moved from Exeter to Wokingham.

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On Sunday June 9th, the following members assembled at Limpsheld, in somewhat inclement weather, and placed flowers on Delius's grave: Mr and Mrs J Geitz (of Norway), Mr R B Meadows, Mr D Cox, Mr R Martin, Mr A E Wylie, Mr and Mrs M Walker, Mr R Osborne, Mr and Mrs S Upton, and Miss E Palmley. The party then proceeded to Orpington, where Mr and Mrs G H Parfitt kindly provided a most delicious tea. Mr and Mrs Geitz, who had only arrived in England that morning, were specially welcomed. Once again, members with cars were good enough to provide transport for non-drivers, so our thanks to them, and to Mr and Mrs Parfitt, for this Delian afternoon.

* * * * *

I expect most of our UK members will have listened to the BBC Radio 4 programme "Celebration" on Tuesday June 4th, which was devoted to the story of Eric Fenby's collaboration with Delius. It was narrated by our President, and contained excerpts on records chosen by him. Along with the familiar and ever-fascinating story of those last years, we heard a couple of anecdotes which I do not remember having heard before. The first concerned the performance of "Cynara" at the 1929 Festival, one of the first pieces Fenby had worked on with the composer. Before they left Grez for London, Delius evidently instructed Jelka to sew a £5 note into the lining of his jacket, with the comment "That is for Eric if the performance comes off". The second story concerned an incident from the final days of the composer's life. It will be remembered that Mr Fenby hurried out to Grez on receiving the news that Jelka was in hospital. When he arrived, he moved a single bed into Delius's room so as to be with him during the night. They evidently slept with the windows open, for when Eric awoke next morning he found himself staring into the solemn gaze of an enormous owl which was perched on the post at the foot of his bed. The bird sat there for some minutes, looking from one musician to the other, before flying off.

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The appearance of a new book on Delius is always a red-letter day, so we look forward with great interest to the publication of "Delius : Portrait of a Cosmopolitan" by our former member Mr Christopher Palmer. Published by Duckworth, it was originally scheduled for appearance in May of this year at a price of £2.95. Now I understand that it will not be on sale until the autumn - at, I hope, the same price :

My attention has also been drawn to "Sir Thomas Beecham - Conductor and Impresario", compiled by H Procter-Gregg. Published by Music Service of York Ltd., 124 The Mount, York, at £3.50, it is described as "good value for money", and contains many references to Delius.

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I must apologise for an erroneous caption to the illustration on page 11 of Journal No. 43. A comparison with the photograph on page 15 of issue No. 42 will quickly show that the former was not taken from the garden of the Hôtel Cheillon, but from a point diametrically opposite. Incidentally, Mr Adrian Harland, who lent me the postcard, says that when he was last in Grez he was told by the Maire that it is planned to rebuild the part of the bridge damaged in the last war as soon as a suitable source of matching stone can be found.

On the Monday after the programme, June 10th, the "Requiem" was broadcast on Radio 4, in the recording conducted by Meredith Davies.

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Mention of the 1929 Festival prompts me to reproduce an advertisement which appeared in the programme. Speaking for myself, I have never seen the postcards in question and would be very interested to know if any member possesses a set. It might even be possible to reproduce some of them in a subsequent issue.

SOUVENIR POST-CARDS of the DELIUS FESTIVAL

Set of Six Cards in envelope, comprising
portraits of Delius in 1874, 1882, 1914,
1929; a view of his house in France
where most of his works have been
composed, and the new portrait of
SIR THOMAS BEECHAM, BART.

which is published for the first time in

~~~~~ M I L O ~~~~~

*The Set 1/- :: (post free 1/2)*

May be obtained from THE ATTENDANTS IN THE  
HALL, and from all Stationers and Music Sellers; or  
direct from the Delius Festival Committee—

90, REGENT STREET, LONDON, W.1

# A MEMORABLE 'MASS OF LIFE'

By NORMAN CAMERON

In his interesting article on Roy Henderson's "Concert Choice", Stephen Lloyd gave a "hoped to be exhaustive" list of the singer's appearances as Zarathustra between 1925 and 1944. But he omitted two performances of which I have first-hand knowledge — that at the Welsh National Eisteddfod, Wrexham, North Wales on August 13th, 1933 and one by the Liverpool Philharmonic Society on December 7th, 1936.

The Liverpool occasion was bedevilled by the unfortunate acoustics of St George's Hall (the city's famous Philharmonic Hall, destroyed by fire on July 5th, 1933, was still rebuilding). Sir Thomas Beecham, due to conduct, found himself unexpectedly indisposed at the last moment and the Society's Choirmaster, Dr J E Wallace, did his gallant best in difficult circumstances. But the Welsh performance was, arguably, the most remarkable ever given of Delius's masterpiece. After forty years it remains a vivid and glowing memory: I should be surprised if Mr Henderson himself has forgotten it.

To set the scene: the Welsh National Eisteddfod is a gargantuan musical and literary competitive bonanza which visits North and South Wales in alternate years. Staged in a vast pavilion seating 8,000, this festival offers a week's orgy of choral, solo vocal and instrumental competitions, interlarded with lengthy Bardic ceremonies, in addition to providing the grand annual get-together for ardent Welsh patriots from, literally, all over the world. At the close of each crowded day come the equally crowded evening concerts, two of which are traditionally allotted to the Eisteddfod Choir. This comprises about 600 amateur singers, nurtured on "Messiah", and drawn from churches, chapels and choral groups throughout the surrounding countryside. Professional soloists and (in those days) an unidentifiable orchestra were available for one final rehearsal only. In these, on the face of it, unpromising conditions, the Wrexham Eisteddfod Music Committee and their conductor, Dr T Hopkin Evans of the Liverpool Welsh Choral Union, announced as the chosen works, Handel's "Samson" and — Delius's "A Mass of Life". Besides Mr Roy Henderson, the soloists engaged were Miss Thea Phillips, Miss Gwladys Garside and Mr Walter Glynn.

Predictably, howls of dismay arose from the ranks of traditionalists bemoaning the "glorious opportunity lost" of mounting a mammoth "Messiah"; while stiller, smaller but no less passionate voices rejoiced in the "glorious opportunity seized" to escape the obsessional "Messiah" rut. Prominent among the latter was Mr George Lerry, editor of the weekly "Wrexham Leader" whom I, as P.R.O. for the recently - formed Delius Society, approached for help in creating a climate of better understanding for this unfamiliar work. That enterprising man finally agreed to publish an interview with Roy Henderson, discussing the "Mass" from the singer's viewpoint, also a series of articles on "Delius and 'A Mass of Life'" aimed at the ordinary reader.

Following publication, a charming letter arrived from Mrs Delius. "We were delighted with your articles about the 'Mass of Life' ", she wrote. "They are full of understanding and should do a lot of good. How I wish we could hear the Eisteddfod performance". This expression of the composer's active interest had a stimulating effect on all concerned, not least the Choir, on whom the Delius magic was beginning to work. Their initial intransigence, expressed in audible groans when rehearsals switched from "Samson" to the alien "Mass", gradually yielded to a mood of increasing excitement and involvement. When the day of the full rehearsal arrived, they were keyed up to a pitch of enthusiasm that augured well for "the night".

The actual performance was described by A K Holland, most knowledgeable and perceptive of writers on Delius, as "a miracle". Writing in the "Liverpool Daily Post", he continued: "It was the most moving performance I have ever heard of the work, and that despite the fact that a certain amount of orchestral detail was lost and the approach to some of the more elaborate choruses was occasionally a little tentative. But the final impression was one of great beauty, and a choir for once sang as if caught up in clouds of glory, allowing itself to be enveloped by the majesty and power of the music. .... There was some splendid and confident singing at most points, and as for the closing pages of the work and the management of the final climax, I venture to doubt if the performance could be bettered anywhere.

"Mr Roy Henderson is, of course, a tower of strength to any performance of the Mass, and a tribute is due to his steadying influence. In this vast building, he was perfectly articulate and he sang throughout as if inspired. ... A work of this kind might easily have gone astray with an Eisteddfod audience, but it held the whole gathering spellbound and, save for one forgivable lapse into premature applause at the end, hushed even the usually irrepressible Eisteddfod excitement.

"It was a great pity that the BBC did not see its way to broadcast the work and thus give the aged composer a chance of hearing so rare and moving a performance".

The postscript to this memorable occasion came from Delius himself. To the Choir he wrote:

"I thank you most heartily for your beautiful singing of the 'Mass of Life' last Friday. From all quarters I hear how admirable it was. The telegram you so kindly sent me gave me the greatest pleasure".

And to Dr Hopkin Evans :

"I have just heard from Norman Cameron what a wonderful performance you gave of my 'Mass of Life'. HOW I regret that I was not able to hear it! Let me thank you from the bottom of my heart for the loving care with which you prepared the performance and for the glorious final achievement.

yours sincerely,

FREDERICK DELIUS."

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REPRINTED FROM THE WREXHAM LEADER - 4. 8. 33.

## 'A MASS OF LIFE'

From the Singer's Standpoint

by

ROY HENDERSON

The famous British baritone who has sung the principal role of Zarathustra in every performance of Delius's masterpiece during the past twelve years and who has made a special study of Delius's music

(In an interview with Norman Cameron)

Singers are, not unnaturally perhaps, apt to criticise any musical work firstly from their own viewpoint, - "Is this music singable and what scope will it give me?" - and secondly from the standpoint of its interest and value as music. So perhaps some excuse should be made for a colleague of mine whose only comment as he came out of Queen's Hall, London after hearing his first performance of Delius's masterpiece, "A Mass of Life" was "What ungrateful stuff to sing!". I must admit that in my student days at the Royal Academy of Music when I first tackled a Delius

score - this was at a time when Delius's music was not nearly so well-known as it has become during the past few years - my instant reaction was, "This is fiendish stuff: appallingly difficult, almost impossible to sing". All the same, it fascinated me and I determined to persevere. Then came a period of what seemed vain and profitless labour at music of which I felt despairingly, as no doubt members of the Eisteddfod Choir felt during their early practices, that I should never be able to make anything. Yet, almost before I realised it, this music had become part of myself: had got a hold upon me in a way that no other music in all my experience has ever gripped me. Now, I would rather sing Delius than anything else. The better I know it, the more his music grows on me - more than that of any other composer living or dead. I have sung the part of Zarathustra at every performance of the "Mass" since 1920, and I find myself looking forward to these performances for months in advance with an excited anticipation quite apart from my usual feelings regarding concert engagements.

But I would be the last to pretend that Delius is easy to sing. In the first place, he is apt to score the choral and orchestral parts of his works so lavishly that it is often difficult for the soloists to penetrate the mass of sound sufficiently to make themselves heard. Of course, much, if not everything depends upon the conductor's skill in keeping the balance between chorus, orchestra and soloist at the more gloriously crowded moments.

Again, much has been said and written about the awkward intervals Delius expects his singers to compass. My own view is that many singers exaggerate this difficulty. Delius does occasionally ask us to achieve big jumps from high notes to low ones, but as his tempi are generally on the slow side, the singer has nearly always time to recover. At all events, Delius is not so great an offender in this respect as composers like Parry and worse still, some of the ultra-moderns whose writing for the voice is simply not "vocal" at all and at whose door lies responsibility for much of the bad singing we hear today. As a matter of fact, Delius's vocal line is as good as most composers' and often better than Wagner's, for Delius conceives a work as a whole, whereas Wagner too often seems to have forgotten all about the vocal parts until it becomes necessary to write in something for the singers at the last moment.

That Delius is apt to write for the voice as though it were another orchestral instrument (thereby obtaining many unique and breathtakingly lovely effects) is probably due to his individual method of composing. How many people know that when Delius composes a work he thinks of it at once in full score with every part in place? The common practice of thinking out themes and then orchestrating them has never been necessary to him.

But, being a genius and, fortunately, having received the minimum amount of academic training, Delius can afford to be a law unto himself. For genius can break every academic rule and remain genius still, and to my mind, there is little doubt that Delius's music will endure when that of most contemporary composers is forgotten. Even today, he has probably more adherents - musicians and ordinary music lovers alike - than any other living composer.

I would like to think that those among our Welsh audience who will be hearing "A Mass of Life" for the first time will realise that it is impossible to understand fully so tremendous a work upon first hearing; realise also that this very fact is the surer proof of the music's intrinsic greatness. And to those who may have heard one of the previous broadcasts of the "Mass" and found it not only incomprehensible but also "rather terrible", as some not-too-musical friends of mine described it to me after listening-in to a London performance, I can only say, follow the example of those same Yorkshiremen who, at my urgent request, gave the work a second trial (this time in the concert hall when we sang it in Leeds) and were entranced by its beauty and instantly converted to Delius and all his works.

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## ‘A MASS OF LIFE’

A POSTSCRIPT BY STEPHEN LLOYD

I am extremely grateful to Mr Norman Cameron for supplying further information concerning past performances, particularly in the interesting way in which he illuminates the bare facts. My thanks are due also to the Editor for permitting me a pre-press glance at Mr Cameron's article! One of the hopes of publishing such lists is that readers may be able to add further details neither generally known nor readily available. Indeed, I have myself since found yet another Henderson performance, on November 11th 1933 at the Royal Albert Hall, under Beecham: thus the dangers of claiming completeness!

In view of the stature of the work and its relative infrequency of performance, it might be of interest to record a few notes on some other past performances. The "Mass" has never really been caught up in the winds of fashion, whereas another large choral work, Bantock's "Omar Khayyam", enjoyed a considerable vogue about the time of the first appearance of the "Mass", and has since sunk into almost total neglect. That, thankfully, has not been the fate of the "Mass".

The first complete performance was given by Beecham on June 7th 1909 in the Queen's Hall as the last of a series of five concerts presented that season by the Beecham Orchestra. Beecham, in "Frederick Delius", gives the 10th as the incorrect date and this has since been taken up by others. The performance was sung in English, as became customary, in the translation by William Wallace (the reader is referred to pp. 160-3 for details of the dispute over two rival translations). There is some slight puzzlement in the reviews of this performance, for "The Musical Times" describes the work as consisting 'of twelve separate sections grouped in four parts'. Furthermore both "The Musical Times" and "The Standard" (see Newsletter No 26, pp. 9-11) mention by name five soloists whereas Beecham lists four. Where, one wonders, did the fifth soloist come from ("The Musical Times" implying the five were vocalists and not instrumentalists)? Did it also really take 'two and a half hours to perform'?

For this occasion, Beecham brought down a famous Potteries choir, the North Staffordshire District Choral Society, which had reached a peak of excellence under its conductor James Whewall (who was mistakenly identified by one member of the audience as 'the librettist' when coming forward for a bow after the performance, as Beecham relates). Beecham had earlier made the acquaintance of the choir in his first performances of "Sea Drift" on December 3rd and 4th 1908 in Hanley and Manchester. The former was the legendary occasion on which the score was apparently mislaid after the last rehearsal and Beecham conducted from memory, a feat he also repeated in his first London performance of "Sea Drift" on February 22nd 1909, a concert which also marked the appearance of the newly-formed Beecham Symphony Orchestra. Both "Sea Drift" and the "Mass" were incidentally transcribed into the tonic sol-fa notation for use in these performances. The "Mass" performance was by all accounts a considerable success.

The next performance, in 1913, was not such a success, circumstances conspiring to prevent a repeat of the earlier triumph. On March 9th Beecham was to have conducted the same forces in the Queen's Hall but a booking error necessitated a change of venue to Covent Garden. The choir had lost their former conductor, James Whewall, who had died at the end of the previous November following an operation for appendicitis, and poor travel arrangements resulted in a weary choir. The baritone who had been engaged to sing was unable to appear, his role being sung by the Zarathustra of 1909, Charles Clarke. The soprano, Miss Gura Hummel, feeling her English untrustworthy, sang in German as it appears the other two soloists did also, leaving the baritone and the choir singing in English! An understandably sub-standard performance was, however, well received by the audience, though the choir's new conductor, Mr Whittaker, declined to take a bow alongside Beecham.

Kennedy Scott's performance on May 16th 1928 was curious for the omission of the baritone solo 'Lyre, my solace' in Part Two. One wonders what it was that prompted the exclusion of one of the most beautiful and reflective moments in the "Mass".

In his book on Beecham, Neville Cardus gives an entertaining example of Delius's helplessness at rehearsal for the 1929 Festival "Mass". It may have been at these rehearsals that Adine O'Neill heard an anguished voice yell, 'There is something wrong somewhere!' unable to indicate the fault. It is probable that this 1929 performance was the precedent for two alterations often made in later performances. The placing of the interval has long been a problem: to allow the double-arch structure of the work to be clearly discernible it is necessary to have the break between the two parts of the work as printed, yet this results in the second half of the performance being considerably longer than the first. Many performances have therefore had the interval placed after the first section of Part 2 ('On the Mountains' prelude leading into the 'Arise' double chorus) instead of before this section. This was Sargent's customary policy and was also adopted in Vernon Handley's Guildford performance. It is interesting to note that in his programme notes for the recent Carnegie Hall performance under Walter Susskind which followed suit, Mr Fenby tells us that this was Beecham's practice at the 1929 Festival, meeting with Delius's approval. However, certainly in his 1931, 1932, 1936, 1946 and 1951 performances, Beecham also made a small change in the order of movements putting the fourth movement of Part 2, "Glowing Midday", after the 'Arise' chorus, followed then by the interval. The second half began with the second section of Part 2, 'Lyre, my solace' with the remaining movements (except No. 4) following consecutively. I am much indebted to both Robert Threlfall and Denham Ford, Chairman of the Beecham Society, for confirmation of this point. This, it is fair to assume, was Beecham's regular practice and no doubt originated also from 1929. A programme note by Heseltine reprinted in 1946 would seem to support this claim. In recent years Audrey Langford in her excellent performance at Lewisham in 1969, Charles Groves in Liverpool and London, and Norman del Mar at Maida Vale have restored the interval to its correct place.

One smaller point of interest is that Beecham usually gave a slightly tricky male chorus line near the opening of the fifth section of Part 1 "Night Reigneth" to the baritone solo as exemplified in his recording. I remember Sargent commenting on this in a warm reminiscence of Beecham during a rehearsal of the "Mass".

The three conductors who re-instated the interval to its rightful place were also those who reverted to the German text. 1951 was probably the sole occasion on which Beecham abandoned the English translation, although at least one other, in

1934, was originally intended to have been in German. In these and the 1913 performances a soloist was no doubt the main consideration in this issue.

It is not easy in retrospect to isolate any performance for its excellence. Two performances after 1929 do however stand out: at the 1931 Leeds Festival, which one reviewer described as 'the best Mass of Life which... Beecham has given', and at the 1936 Norwich Festival where Beecham, conducting from memory, stirred Thomas Russell to comment "I do not expect to hear a performance of the same quality again". Perhaps those who heard del Mar's studio broadcast may wish to echo that remark.

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## DELIUS ON RECORD

### THE BEECHAM REISSUES

By LYNDON JENKINS

With CBS's welcome programme to restore to the catalogue all the Delius works conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham which originally appeared on the Columbia, Philips and Fontana labels nearing completion, perhaps it is an opportune moment to have a retrospective look at this magnificent range of performances from the fifties. I will exclude, if I may, the famous "Mass of Life" recording since it really deserves an article to itself. Suffice it to say that the performance which gave many of us our introduction to this masterwork remains an indispensable part of any Delius collection: one feels it should properly never be absent from the catalogue.

Unlike the "Mass of Life", "Appalachia" had been recorded before, in 1938, but the advances made in recording techniques in the intervening years naturally invested the 1953 LP with revelatory qualities so far as the music was concerned. In its latest form it sounds better than the original, and far better than either of the earlier issues which made the strings thin and bloodless. For reasons I could never understand criticism was levelled at the solo singer, particularly when the later Barbirolli version was released: in my view the reverse should be the case.

Other important works soon to follow were "Paris" and "Sea Drift": the latter was especially valuable since it is perhaps more than any other the work over which conductors, critics and public alike are unanimous in acknowledging as an undisputed masterpiece. I have met people who will listen to and enthuse about "Sea Drift" but will have nothing to do with any other score of Delius. For them the disc confirmed what a marvellous piece it is in an atmospheric performance and recording which managed

to capture a great deal of the detail of Beecham's direction and his performers: the Chorus was fine and, if Bruce Boyce, although undeniably sympathetic, was a little plain, the orchestral playing reached a rare standard, vivid and full of telling detail. The monaural sound was really very good for its period, while the problems of balance between soloist, a large chorus and orchestra were solved with remarkable success. Rehearing it nearly twenty years later in the latest transfer, one realises just how good it was: constriction is inevitable at times despite enhanced spaciousness, but on the whole its impact is very immediate and, at the great climaxes, very thrilling.

There is a big difference between the sound of this and "Paris" (originally recorded with "Sea Drift") and, say, "North Country Sketches" which pre-dated it by five years. It arises mainly because "Sea Drift" and "Paris" were obviously recorded in a large hall (Walthamstow Town Hall) whereas the other was done in a studio and on its first appearance might have been a transfer from 78 rpm masters, so boxy and lacking in range was it. (Actually the 78 rpm set, upon which the movements appeared in the order 1,3,2,4, was a very good specimen.) But what the CBS engineers have been able to do to improve it makes it the revelation of the whole new set of transfers.

With its prodigious range of sound, its alternation of the fullest scoring with the lightest, its embarrassing wealth of detail, "North Country Sketches" must be an elusive work to capture for the gramophone. Fortunately for the engineers Sir Thomas's blue pencil had been at work to good purpose, largely ensuring that what should be heard was heard. But aside from that, what a marvellous reading it is. I never cease to admire the way he manages so effortlessly the many tempo changes in the "Dance" as well as in the "March of Spring", so that the essential flow is preserved with the utmost naturalness and each movement sounds complete in itself. This, to my mind, is a virtuoso score and only a virtuoso conductor can bring it off completely successfully. By "virtuoso conductor" I mean one who can determine in his head a near-perfect reading, transmit his ideas into his score and then persuade the ninety-odd members of an orchestra to realise them; in this sense Beecham was certainly a virtuoso conductor. I cannot recommend too highly prolonged study of this record together with the score (a miniature is published by Augener) both for Delius lovers and the admirer of the art of great conducting.

"Eventyr" is another virtuoso score, of its kind, but undeniably more straightforward than the earlier work. Again the CBS engineers have done wonders in bringing the orchestra up so fresh and firm; gone is the tubbiness which informed earlier pressings, while only in the heaviest passages does the sound tend to become uncomfortably tight; the trombones tend to come off worst, but the strings are good all through. The Closing Scene from "Koanga" follows "Eventyr" on the new disc, as different from

it as music as anything can be; however, this short glimpse of Beecham's conducting from one of the operas is valuable and, even though it is mainly an orchestral excerpt, it makes one regret all the same that his major survey of the orchestral works on LP did not also extend to the operas.

It did, however, take in the fascinating incidental music composed for Flecker's play "Hassan", and even if we haven't got the whole score this one side of 61224 contains an interesting selection of orchestral and choral snippets. But it is a bit of an oddity, and there are aspects which strike one as being not quite right: for example, the small theatre orchestra Delius wrote for could hardly have sounded like the RPO here, clearly at full strength and in a large resonant hall. The effect is undeniably outsize, blown-up and probably too grand for the charming if lightweight music; then in some of the solo vocal numbers, the ensemble is far from perfect; and does the "Serenade" reappear in a version for solo viola? Yet it is worth it to have the "Intermezzo" and the "Closing Scene" and other bits (though I confess I never hear "We take the Golden Road" sung without recalling the commentator who remarked that this line was repeated so often by the beggars as they set out 'that one begins to doubt their resolution').

Now we await one last disc which will restore to circulation what is in my opinion one of the greatest-ever performances of "In a Summer Garden". It should also include the 1950 version of "Over the Hills and Far Away" and finally that rare masterpiece so beloved of Eric Fenby, "An Arabesque", the latter invaluable as a historical document in that not only is it conducted by Beecham (who regarded it so highly) but is sung in the original Danish.

|                |             |                                                                         |
|----------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A Mass of Life | CBS 61182-3 | Previously Columbia<br>33CX1078-9<br>Fontana CFL1005-6<br>Recorded 1952 |
| Sea Drift      | CBS 61224   | Previously Philips ABL3088<br>Recorded 1954                             |
| Hassan         | CBS 61224   | Previously Fontana CFL1020<br>Philips GL5691<br>Recorded 1955           |
| Paris          | CBS 61271   | Previously Philips ABL3088<br>Recorded 1955                             |

|                        |           |                                                                                                               |
|------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Eventyr                | CBS 61271 | Previously Columbia LX8931-2<br>(78 rpm version)<br>Fontana CFE15022 (45 rpm)<br>and CFL1042<br>Recorded 1951 |
| Koanga: Closing Scene  | CBS 61271 | Previously Columbia LX1502<br>(78 rpm version)<br>Fontana CFL1033<br>Philips GL5693<br>Recorded 1951          |
| North Country Sketches | CBS 61354 | Previously Columbia LX1399-<br>1401 (78 rpm version)<br>Fontana CFL1020<br>Philips GL5691<br>Recorded 1949    |
| Appalachia             | CBS 61354 | Previously Columbia 33CX1112<br>Fontana CFL1009<br>Philips GL5690<br>Recorded 1952                            |

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# STRINDBERG, MUNCH AND DELIUS

A Sequel to

## GREZ BEFORE DELIUS - Part II

By CHRISTOPHER REDWOOD

After leaving Grez, the Strindbergs returned to Switzerland and there is no record of August visiting the village again. In 1891 he was divorced from Siri, finding himself as a result both penniless and out of favour with the Swedish literary world. He was rescued by fellow-countrymen in Berlin who raised sufficient money for him to join them. Here he began to haunt "The Cloister", a tavern on the corner of the Unter den Linden and Neue Wilhelmstrasse, which he nicknamed "Zum Schwarzen Fer-

kel" ("The Black Boar" or "The Black Porker"). A building of ecclesiastical design, it had a vaulted roof and large stained-glass Gothic windows which contrasted sharply with the pagan scenes decorating the walls. The counter was fashioned like a tabernacle and the building divided into a number of "chapels" where various groups congregated. Only actors, artists and literary people patronized it, and all were more or less acquainted with one another. The regular habitués at this time included Sibelius, Edvard Munch, the Danish poet Holger Drachmann (some of whose poems were set by Delius), the Norwegian dramatist Gunnar Heiberg (who later met Delius in Paris and invited him to provide incidental music for his play "Folkeraadet"), and another Norwegian writer Knut Hamsun (who, according to Beecham, was to accompany Delius a few years later on a musical tour of Norway, together with the violinist Halvdan Jebe). Strindberg described the Scandinavian emigrants as

"an unusual body of talent, seeking recognition, understanding,  
and daily bread: dissatisfied and at loggerheads with the people  
at home".

Several of them were, like Strindberg, divorced. As might be expected, the company was mainly masculine.

However, a few females penetrated the "Ferkel circle", as it has become known, one of them a Norwegian painter named Dagny Juel. It was said that she had

"a figure like a fourteenth-century Madonna, and a laugh that  
drove men crazy. She could drink absinthe by the litre and  
never get drunk. There was in addition a snake-like langour  
in all her movements, which nevertheless did not exclude the  
possibility of a lightning attack".

Introduced to the circle by Edvard Munch, whose mistress she was, she admitted having always been fascinated by Strindberg, and the moment they met she transferred her favours to him. This affair, however, only lasted three weeks before she was off with another member of the fraternity. Eventually she married Stanislaw Przybyszewski, an alcoholic poet who had until then been a devoted friend and admirer of Strindberg. Enmity now grew up between them and Strindberg once struck the Pole. By this time, Munch was able to take a detached view of the whole scene, and he composed a picture which shows a green-faced Przybyszewski in the foreground while another man in the background admires the naked Dagny. Entitled "Jealousy", it became one of his most famous canvases, and was shown in the London Munch exhibition earlier this year. (There was also a full-length portrait of Dagny, and lithographs depicting Przybyszewski and Strindberg.)

One other woman whom he met at this time was Frida Uhl, a twenty year-old Austrian journalist who became the second Fru Strindberg in 1893. They visited England, produced a child and separated in little more than eighteen months. In September 1894 they travelled to Paris for the première of his play "The Father", and here they spent their last two months together, parting at the Gare du Nord in November. On December 15th "The Father" was given by the Théâtre de L' Œuvre before an audience which included Zola, Rodin and Gauguin. The author became a success overnight.

Since he had last been in France Strindberg had read Nietzsche, for whom he developed a great admiration. This became mutual and the two writers corresponded regularly until the German's mind gave way (he suffered from the same disease as later afflicted Delius; another great writer who was dying from the same cause at about this time was de Maupassant.) Indeed, Strindberg tells us in his autobiographical novel "The Cloister" (his own account of the years in question) that he had long dreamed of founding a non-confessional monastery for

"the training of supermen, by means of asceticism, meditation and the practice of science, literature and art. Religion was not mentioned,.....". (!)

This longest stay in Paris was destined to last for two years and it was during this time that he became acquainted with Delius. It was also the time when he came nearest to losing his reason permanently, usually referred to as the "Inferno" crisis. The continued rebuffs of the literary world (1893 had brought another prosecution for immorality) seem to have been responsible for turning his attention away from writing and reawakening his interest in science (he had been a medical student in his youth). Now it leaned towards alchemy, and also towards hypnotism and allied studies. It was inevitable that these should lead on to belief in the occult, which was very fashionable in Paris at this period - Delius was one who shared it - and he took up residence in the Quartier Latin. Delius wrote down his recollections of Strindberg in an article published in "The Sackbut" (December 1920) and quoted by Peter Warlock in his biography. He tells how he and the poet Leclercq rigged up a bogus table-rapping séance at his rooms, presenting Strindberg with the momentous word "merde".

They met at the studio of Ida Ericson, a Swedish sculptress married to William Molard, a Franco-Norwegian composer. Strindberg was then resident in a pension at 12 Rue de la Grande Chaumière, Montparnasse, just opposite the famous crémérie of Mère Charlotte where artists met and received 'unlimited' credit. In his autobiographical novel "Inferno" Strindberg describes a meal at the café:



Strindberg and the two eldest children of his first marriage, photographed in Switzerland in 1886, just after his visits to Grez-sur-Loing

"When I last ate dinner there it was served in the yard because of the heat. The table was placed between the rubbish-bin and the conveniences. Over the rubbish-bin was the picture of the crucified woman by my former friend the American, hung there as a revenge because he had gone off without paying what he owed. Near the table the Russians had set up a statuette of a warrior armed with a sickle, their national emblem. To scare me, of course. A young gutter-snipe, who lives in the house, went to the closet at my rear with the evident intention of annoying me. That yard is as narrow as a well and the sun cannot reach it because of the high walls. The cocottes, who have taken up residence here and there on every storey above the yard, had opened their windows and were raining indecent remarks upon our heads. Servants came out with buckets and emptied garbage into the rubbish-bin. It was Hell let loose...."

But then, for Strindberg at this time, life was Hell let loose, and his description need not be taken too literally. He lived in constant fear that Przybyszewski would come to seek his revenge, and was for ever hearing a piano playing Schumann's "Aufschwung" - the Pole's party-piece. Now news came that Dagny Juel had been shot dead by one of her lovers because she intended to leave him for another. At first Przybyszewski was arrested as a suspect, but was later released for lack of evidence, and he did indeed flee to Paris. Small wonder that Delius and Munch, after a pleasant chat at Strindberg's rooms one day, received a postcard accusing them of attempting to assassinate him !

Another favourite haunt was the Café Closerie des Lilas, where he would drink absinthe, sometimes with Delius or Munch, at other times alone. All the time he was continuing with his alchemical experiments, first seeking to make gold from iron and sulphur, then iodine from coal, and he was apparently directly responsible for a forty-point fall in the price of iodine on the Hamburg stock exchange. Delius told Warlock that he had such a convincing way of explaining his work that the composer, for one, was quite taken in by him. Eventually he inflicted severe burns on his delicate hands and spent the first two months of 1895 in the St Louis Hospital, where he also received some mental treatment. Then he turned to botanical studies. With Delius, he would walk through the Luxembourg Gardens, or visit the Jardin des Plantes. He brought out a pamphlet, "Sylva Sylvarum", setting out his theories, one of which apparently was "that the gorilla was descended from the union of a ship-wrecked sailor and a female monkey". However, he never succeeded in showing convincing proof of the success of his experiments, and he was suspected of being a fraud.



"Jealousy" by Edvard Munch, painted 1894 -5

A short trip to Sweden to seek medical advice - which in the event he rejected - lasted only six weeks before he returned to the Quartier Latin, this time to the Hôtel Orfila, a pension for monks and students. A flirtation with theosophy seems to have been thwarted mainly by the fact that its leading exponent was a woman! Further sinister happenings at the pension caused him to flee to a hotel near the Jardin des Plantes. He considered suicide, but then in July 1896 he decided to escape to friends in Dieppe. By now, however, Delius was on his Norwegian tour with Jebe and Hamsun, and by the time he had returned, Strindberg had moved back to Sweden. Although he spent two further months in Paris in the summer of 1897, he and Delius never met again.

By this time also, Delius had become acquainted with Jelka. Philip Oyler, who knew both of them well in their later years, states that they were introduced at a dinner-party given by one of Jelka's friends, a Swedish sculptress. He goes on to say that in the summer of 1897 all three of them were installed in the "Poule d' Eau", which was the official name of the former posting-house more affectionately known as the Hôtel Cheillon. I have not come across this information anywhere else, but there seems little doubt that Jelka stayed here with her mother when she was painting in the Marquis de Carzeaux's garden. (Incidentally, those who have read Gloria Jahoda's alleged biography of Delius, "The Road to Samarkand", may have been puzzled to read that the composer stayed at an inn called "The Pool of Water". I fear Miss Jahoda's French, like her musicology, is fallible.) The sculptress (I assume Oyler was referring to Ida Gerhardt) apparently insisted on being accompanied by a pair of goats (she had a fear of unpasteurised milk) as well as her two dogs. This ill-assorted septet even took trips on the river together - I wonder what Delius had to say about that?!

And so we arrive at that part of the history of Grez that is well-known to admirers of Delius. As to the Hôtel Cheillon, Will Low relates that shortly after his stay there the original building fell into ruin and was rebuilt; but simplicity had been the secret of its success. No staff were employed, only M. and Mme. Cheillon and their daughters. The food was left on a side-table in the salle-à-manger, and the guests helped themselves. Thus were costs kept down. As times changed and travel became easier a new type of clientèle appeared, demanding better service and more ambitious fare. The "Poule d' Eau" became an ordinary riverside hotel. By the time Eric Fenby arrived at Grez in 1928, it was in a decidedly seedy state, and within a year or so had ceased business altogether.

# NEWS FROM AMERICA

On January 23rd 1974, our President, Mr Eric Fenby, addressed the Woman's Club of Jacksonville as part of his American tour. The following report and photograph are reproduced by courtesy of the Florida Times-Union of Jacksonville:

## 'NO ONE ELSE FOR ME....'

"He could have nothing worthwhile without Jelka", declared Eric Fenby, OBE., of London, England, suprising an audience of women at the Woman's Club of Jacksonville on Wednesday.

The women, who arrived at the luncheon fully expecting to hear Fenby reiterate the talents of Frederick Delius as a part of the Delius Festival of 1974, instead heard a rather romantic account of Delius' marriage to a woman who loved him for many years, thinking she had no chance of becoming his wife.

A composer in his own right, Fenby was with Delius for the last six years of his life; during those years Delius was blind and needed Fenby to write down his music for him. Fenby, author of "Delius as I Knew Him", was introduced by Dr Frances B. Kinne. Also in attendance was Gloria Jahoda, who has written a biography of Delius, "The Road to Samarkand".

"You hear very little about Jelka", said Fenby recalling the day 46 years ago when he was met at the station in the drizzling rain by Jelka Delius, a simply dressed woman with fair skin and kind eyes. "Jelka was the most extraordinary person, as I found out.....Jelka was born into a family of diplomats of German extraction. She had had a rather roving life as a girl, and she had picked up a number of languages quite readily....She was not a very competent musician, but she knew what she liked and loved of Delius' music".

According to Fenby's account, Jelka Rosen, an artist, met the English composer Delius at a party and, knowing he admired Grieg, sang some songs by that composer age. Delius gave no sign he noticed, but next day he showed up at her studio and sang songs by Grieg for her. "Jelka said, 'I knew then there was no one else but him for me' ", Fenby related, "but unfortunately, there were a lot of others like her".

Because Jelka had heard Delius say he loved a certain plot of land, she wanted it. She did not have enough money to buy it, but she persuaded her mother to provide enough funds to make up the difference. Fenby related that Delius left to revisit



For Delius Society member Mrs John Donahoo and Mrs J Elsworth Davis (right), Eric Fenby plays pieces that were particular favorites of Frederick Delius' wife, Jelka, Guest speaker at a Woman's Club luncheon Wednesday that was part of the Delius Festival of 1974. Fenby was a close associate of the late composer.

— Times-Union photo by Don Burk

America and sent Jelka not one word of communication for six months. "Six months later, and this was in 1897, there was a postcard dropped in the mailbox", he continued, "and it said, 'I am coming down for the weekend', and signed 'Fritz'. He came back, and stayed for the rest of his life".

Fenby recalled being afraid of offering any critical appraisal of Delius' music in fear he would be sent back to England if he angered the composer. However, Jelka told him to go ahead and tell Delius what he thought, even though it might not be what Delius expected.

Delius' reaction? "He was appalled", said Fenby. "I thought he was going to have a stroke".

During Fenby's years with the Delius couple, Jelka developed cancer, and this fact was kept from Delius. She eventually had to be hospitalized, but Delius missed her so much that she was brought home from the hospital to be with him. "Well, Delius did not last more than two days after that", said Fenby. "He died in my arms one Sunday morning".

Delius had asked to be buried in the garden of the home he loved, Fenby related, but French laws forbade it, so his body was returned to England.

"Delius had said, 'I never want to be taken into a church'", said Fenby. "The grave-diggers were on strike....At just a few minutes before midnight the body was lowered into the grave....Jelka died the following week".

In conclusion Fenby told the clubwomen, "I am sure that everyone in this room would have loved her".

Born in England, Delius is important to Floridians because he lived for two years at Solano Grove near Jacksonville and later wrote a number of musical pieces inspired by his love for Florida.

ELAINE KENT  
Times-Union Staff Writer

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The attention of readers is drawn to the article "Late Swallows in Florida" by Robert Threlfall which appeared in the Spring 1974 issue of "The Composer". Copies can be obtained from The Composers' Guild of Great Britain, 10 Stratford Place, London W1N 9AE, price 30p.

# CORRESPONDENCE

## ESTELLE PALMLEY IN THE UNITED STATES

Thank you for your editorial note of consolation (Newsletter No 42).

It was a great disappointment that I did not see the Delius opera, "A Village Romeo and Juliet", in New York last September, owing to a musicians' union strike. On settlement of the dispute, the opera was rescheduled for two performances in October, but unfortunately I could not delay my departure from New York beyond September 27th.

I suppose only an optimist would have sailed for New York, knowing that the strike had started, yet still hoping it would be settled by the time the boat arrived: However, Mrs Ella Grainger and Mr Stewart Manville, who kindly met me in New York, were not able to give me any such news.

If I give prominence to one particular event during my stay, it is because it was a gathering of Society members, which happens fairly frequently in London, but which fairly frequently in London, but which has been less possible for US members. This took place, through the generosity of Mr Ralph Stang and Mr Brian Looker, at their apartment on West 57th Street, when the following members and friends were also present: Mrs Louise Giraldi, Mrs Helen Halperin, Mrs Grace Scott, Mr Monroe Bloch, Mr Mel Tormé, Mr and Mrs L Robert Charles, Mr Bill Perrott, Mr Richard Foose, Mr Stewart Manville and Mr Robert Lyons.

This was particularly memorable for me, as I heard for the first time anywhere the four Delius/Nietzsche songs, sung by Ralph Stang: and Stewart Manville then sang Percy Grainger's "Willow, Willow". It was obvious that Mel Tormé (the well-known singer, composer, actor, ardent Delian and Anglophile) was much enjoying his role on this occasion as a most enthusiastic member of the audience. Mr Bill Perrott then showed us some slides he had taken at Grez in 1973, and following this I was much moved to be presented with two books about America (with a Delian flavour!) and a Walt Whitman commemorative medal.

The evening concluded with a dinner, at which I was the guest of honour, and at which a toast was drunk to the immortal memory of Frederick Delius.

Owing to limitations of space, I can only briefly recall here a delightful luncheon at which Mr John Coveney was host to Bill Perrott, Bob Lyons and myself, and again thank Professor and Mrs Michael Alssid for having invited me to visit

them in Boston. I must also thank Mrs Jeanna Donahoo for all the helpful bulletins she sent me about the strike (having herself travelled to New York to find the performances on September 13th cancelled), and all other members who contacted me, or tried to contact me by phone or letter.

I would also like to again express my appreciation to Mr Stewart Manville for having taken me on so many delightful tours on Westchester County, and to Mrs Ella Grainger, Mr Stewart Manville and Mr Manuel Tarshish for their hospitality; to Mr and Mrs Leo Manville (Stewart's parents) for their kindness to me throughout my visit; and especially to Bill Perrott and Bob Lyons for coming to New York to spend a few days with me.

Finally I would again like to thank the "sponsors" of my visit, the members of the Delius Society.

I am more than pleased to hear that the New York City Opera is to present "A Village Romeo and Juliet" on three dates this autumn - October 17th and November 5th at 8 pm, and November 10th at 1 pm - and we may perhaps hope that this, and other Delius operas, will now find a permanent place in the repertoire.

Edgware, Middlesex.

ESTELLE PALMLEY.

#### RARE RECORDINGS

Thank you for issue No 42 of the Delius Society Newsletter and I would like to congratulate you on the very attractive and practical new format, which has a real professional touch; also the informative and absorbing contents.

There are two points I would like to raise - firstly the possibility of obtaining tapes of the various broadcasts you detail. Thanks to your timely note I managed to get a UK friend of mine to obtain a tape of "In a Summer Garden" and other works but I would dearly like to get one of "Paa Vidderne" which I last heard at the 1946 Festival. I wonder what it would cost to sponsor a disc from the Kensington orchestra covering the Delius, Bax and Baines pieces? A Mr M G Thomas issued a set of records by a 'Modern Symphony Orchestra' which included four discs of Auber overtures and another two of Strauss waltzes; if he can manage this, then it should not be beyond the bounds of possibility for the Society to at least investigate the practicality of doing something similar? Also is it possible to get a limited issue of the Beecham recording of "Paa Vidderne" which EMI are holding? A live

performance is of course preferable to a recording but with little performed works it is indeed unfortunate if the opportunity is not taken to record the event for posterity. I tried to get to England for this concert but business prevented it.

My second point concerns the translation used in "A Village Romeo and Juliet". Beecham, in his recording, used a different translation to that used in the recent issue. I find that the translation used by Beecham is far more fitting than that in the recent recording which sounds stilted and uncomfortable beside the Beecham. I don't know which translation came first but to me it sounds as though in the recent recording someone has tried to find different words at all costs - "Vrenchen" instead of "Vreli" is a typical example; I wonder if members have a particular preference? Delius has fared well on records in recent years but apart from "Paa Vidderne", recordings are needed of "Life's Dance", "Fantastic Dance", "Spring Morning" and some of the unrecorded songs: also re-recordings of "Songs of Farewell" and "Song of the High Hills"..

The Society is obviously going from strength to strength and the danger of initial enthusiasm not being maintained seems well past. I'm sorry not to be closer to give some practical support.

Walchwil, Switzerland.

L F B Gilhespy.

Editor's Note: With one meeting last season and the first of next season devoted to recordings of rare Delius (and rare recordings of Delius!) it is clear that the question of releasing some of these records is uppermost in many people's minds. For my own part, I would have thought that the most important move would be to get hold of the Beecham recording of "Paa Vidderne" which Mr Gilhespy mentions. Surely the Delius Trust could bring about its issue, even if only in a limited edition? After all, it would have the interest of being vintage Beecham, as well as vintage Delius.

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On June 18th, BBC Radio London broadcast a song recital by Michael Goldthorpe (tenor) with Kenneth Barclay (piano) which contained songs by Warlock, Dibdin, Quilter, Ireland, Orr, Crafton Harris and Stuart Ward. Both C W Orr and Crafton Harris are, of course, members of the Delius Society.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

July 20th at 7.30 pm at the Royal Albert Hall, London and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 - "Walk to the Paradise Garden" (Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra/Sir Charles Groves). Programme also contains works by Elgar, Walton and Tchaikovsky

July 25th at 8.10 pm on BBC Radio London. Transmission of concert held at St John's, Smith Square, London SW1 earlier this year. "Paa Vidderne" (Kensington Symphony Orchestra/Leslie Head). Programme also contains works by Bax, William Baines (both premières), Bruch and Nielsen.

July 30th at 7.30 pm at the Royal Albert Hall, London and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 - "Dance Rhapsody No. 1" (BBC Symphony Orchestra/John Pritchard). Programme also contains works by Britten, Elgar, Holst and Williamson

August 3rd at 7.30 pm at the Royal Albert Hall, London and broadcast on BBC Radio 3 - "Brigg Fair (BBC Concert Orchestra/Ashley Lawrence). Programme also contains Grainger's setting of "Brigg Fair" and "Lincolnshire Posy" plus works by Holst, Birtwistle, Elgar and Sullivan's "Trial by Jury"

October 17th at 8.00 pm at the New York City Opera - "A Village Romeo and Juliet" (Corsaro production - revival)

October 31st at 7.30 pm at Holborn Library, Theobalds Road, London WC1 - Delius Society Meeting : "More Rare Recordings of Delius" presented by Charles Barnard and Malcolm Walker

November 5th at 8.00 pm at the New York City Opera - "A Village Romeo and Juliet" (second performance)

November 10th at 1.00 pm (matinee) at the New York City Opera - "A Village Romeo and Juliet" (final performance this season)

NB: It has been suggested that US members meet on this last occasion. Those interested are advised to contact William W Marsh Jun., 1526 Pine Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19102, USA.

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copy preparation and design by Malcolm Walker



